

PRESS AND RADIO

IN THE FIRST EDITION OF CATALÒNIA WE PRESENTED A DOSSIER ON TV3, CATALONIA'S NATIONAL TELEVISION; NOW WE WANT TO WIDEN OUR VIEW OF THE CATALAN MEDIA WITH A DESCRIPTION OF TODAY'S PRESS, RADIO AND REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS IN THE CATALAN-SPEAKING WORLD. OUR INTENTION IS NOT TO PROVIDE A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE CATALAN PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE, SO MUCH AS TO GIVE SOME IDEA OF WHAT IS OFFERED BY THE MEDIA, WHETHER WRITTEN OR BROADCAST, IN CATALONIA TODAY. THE DIFFICULTIES THAT SMALL COUNTRIES COME UP AGAINST IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH PUBLICATIONS OR RADIO STATIONS ARE MANY AND VARIED. THIS IS ONE OF THE CHALLENGES THAT WE, IN OUR COUNTRY, HAVE TO FACE UP TO. IF WE RESPOND ACCORDINGLY, IT WILL MEAN A GREAT STEP FORWARD FOR THE CATALAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE. IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT THE FRONTIERS OF THE FUTURE WILL BE DEFINED BY THE LIMITS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA: FACED WITH THIS SITUATION, CATALAN CULTURE HAS JOINED THE RACE TO ESTABLISH ITS IDENTITY.

THE CATALAN PRESS

CATALAN PUBLICATIONS NOW OCCUPY AN IMPORTANT POSITION IN THE COMMUNICATIONS WORLD. IF WE COMPARE THE PRESENT SITUATION WITH THE ONE THAT EXISTED TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, NO-ONE CAN DENY THAT THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, BOTH IN THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS AND IN THE NUMBER OF READERS.

ALBERT VILADOT JOURNALIST



© ELOI BONJOCH

Catalan publications now occupy an important position in the communications world. If we compare the present situation with the one that existed ten or fifteen years ago, no-one can deny that there has been significant progress, both in the number of publications and in the number of readers. Nevertheless, the results can never be as good as those who have an interest or a concern in the problem would wish. Although the Catalan press makes a good showing in the communications world, it still takes second place to the Castilian

press. Present trends show that the situation is evening out, but the process is a very slow one, and one which is influenced by many factors.

Before continuing this analysis, it is worth looking at a few basic facts so that the reader can find his bearings. First of all, there are three Catalan dailies that come out seven days a week, each with its respective supplements. All three provide general information, that is to say, all three report on current events all around the world, and not only on Catalan local news. They therefore include all the usual

sections on international events, politics, economics, culture, etc. Their aim is to compete directly with the Castilian newspapers, which represent a clear majority both in the *Principat* and in the *País Valencià* and the Balearic Isles.

The oldest Catalan newspaper is *Avui*, which was born on 23 April 1976, the day of Catalonia's patron, Saint George. It appeared, then, a mere five months after the death of Franco and with the permission of the first government of the monarchy, at the beginning of the so-called democratic transition. The legalization of



Avui was one of the unmistakable signs that the new political situation was going to allow linguistic and cultural normality in Catalonia. The many attempts to bring out a Catalan newspaper during the dictatorship had all failed due to the anti-Catalan persecution on the part of the Spanish administration. For this reason, *Avui* was welcomed by all the antidictatorial forces as a step in the advance of Catalanism and democracy. After the first few months, during which it had no clear policy, the newspaper started to adopt more decidedly nationalist positions and it still maintains this line today.

Since February 1987, coinciding with the change of editor and director, *Avui* has shown an interesting change in presentation and contents, which has brought it closer to a more popular style of newspaper. This up-dating, which is still in progress, has led to a slight increase in circulation, now officially 45,000. *Avui* is considered a national newspaper, that is to say, it tries to reach beyond Barcelona, where it is published, and the rest of the *Principat*, to the *País Valencià* and the Balearic Isles. The truth is that sales in these areas are poor and for this reason special

editions, printed in Valencia and Majorca, will shortly be launched.

A few years after *Avui*, the second newspaper printed in Catalan since 1939 appeared in Girona: *Punt Diari*. This publication is the most widely-read in northern Catalonia, where the socio-linguistic situation favours the Catalan language. Officially, it sells about 10,000 copies, distributed to all the area around the city of Girona, with a special edition for each region. *Punt Diari*, then, is an example of a successful regional publication.

To complete this description of the Catalan daily press, one has to mention the *Diari de Barcelona*, also known as the *Brusi* after one of its owners of over a hundred years ago. The *Diari de Barcelona* in Catalan came on to the streets on 13 March 1987; it is therefore the youngest of the dailies published in Catalan. But strangely enough, it is also one of the oldest newspapers in Europe, beaten only by *The Times*, of London. The *Diari de Barcelona* was first published in 1792, during the French revolution. After 180 years of appearing practically uninterrupted in Castilian (except for a few years in Catalan during the Napoleonic

invasion), *Diari de Barcelona* disappeared from the newsagents for financial reasons. Now, Barcelona City Hall, an important businessman of the newspaper world, and other, small shareholders have decided to revive the old newspaper, this time in Catalan.

Most of the *Diari de Barcelona's* readership is concentrated in the capital of Catalonia, although it is also sold in the other regions. According to official figures, sales are between 15,000 and 20,000 copies.

The situation of the Catalan press is, therefore, good, but it still has a long way to go. The technological challenge is possibly one of the most important. It also has to overcome the language barrier. Strangely enough, Catalan-speakers, who represent a majority and belong to the more educated sectors of society, read mainly in Castilian, because of habit, because of difficulty, but also because Catalan products still have to answer the challenge of competitiveness.

Possibly the problem is more serious in the *País Valencià* and the Balearic Isles, where, apart from a few copies of *Avui*, the Catalan press is non-existent.



The fact that many of the Castilian papers published in the *Països Catalans* include articles or whole pages in Catalan can also be considered a good thing. These are normally articles devoted to Catalan cultural information. Generally speaking, these pages present a danger: in a way, they are saying that Catalan can only be used when dealing with questions of culture, books, language, etc., since they are surrounded by pages of information covering international politics, economics or sport, always in Castilian.

One of the fields in which the process of normalization of written Catalan is least advanced is the weekly press. There are only two weekly magazines, one of which, *El Temps*, is published in Valencia and distributed throughout the *Països Catalans*, while the other one, *El Món*, has a very reduced circulation, limited to Catalonia and mainly Barcelona city. The two publications have to struggle to survive and can only compete very precariously with their Castilian-language brothers. *El Temps* has an ambitious project aimed at improving on the present readership of 12,000. *El Món* sells about 2,000 copies. Both tend towards

local politics and cultural information. There are also several monthly publications and others that appear less frequently, that deal with specialized subjects. In this respect the situation is once again fairly hopeful, although there is still room for improvement. Historians, for example, have the monthly *L'Avenç*, which aims to divulge and reflect on history, not only that of Catalonia. Scientists have *Ciència*, music-lovers the *Revista Musical Catalana*, and so on. *Serra d'Or*, a monthly linked to the monks of Montserrat, is the oldest of all, and has managed to keep up a good standard of information and analysis of the broad subject matter it covers. *Revista de Catalunya* stands out amongst magazines devoted to high culture.

The autonomic and local institutions also tend to publish magazines that appear at varying intervals, as do all sorts of clubs, centres and civic organizations. Political parties of all tendencies also do the same, usually in Catalan or bilingually.

All these various newspapers and publications mentioned make up a broad network of publications in Catalan which together achieve a common aim: to show

that Catalan is a language which is appropriate for any contemporary subject, whether it be politics, economics, international relations, physics, musicology or pot-holing.

Many of these publications could not exist without the institutional assistance they receive and which were approved by the *Parlament de Catalunya*. This is because the older generations received all their education in Castilian. Subsequently, there is still a certain degree of illiteracy in Catalan, even among the best-educated people. This backwardness in the press is surprising if we compare it with the overwhelming success of Catalan television and radio. The reason for this difference is the contradiction that exists amongst large sectors of the public who understand Catalan and normally speak it, but who have difficulty reading or writing it. For this reason, the future of the press in Catalan lies mainly in the younger generations, who did not suffer the restrictions imposed by the Franco regime, who are receiving an education in their own language, at all levels, and who have already begun to experience the exciting world of written communication. ●